

Senator Margaret E. O'Brien
State Senator, District 20

September 18, 2016

Senator O'Brien,

I am submitting this letter to be included in the public record in support of the package of bills related to the 'vulnerable roadway users' bills.

I want to thank you for bringing this package of bills to my attention. By way of introduction, I am Paul Runnels, one of the surviving victims of the June 7, 2016, Kalamazoo bicycling tragedy which killed 5 fellow riders and left four of us injured, but recovering. It is my understanding that the Kalamazoo tragedy was, in part, a stimulus for these 'vulnerable roadway users' bills. I want to acknowledge that prior enactment of these bills would have had little impact on our tragedy. However, they would have had an impact on the far too numerous single bicycle/automobile accidents which have occurred subsequent to June 7. Additionally, I have had several friends who have been injured or killed in single bicycle/vehicle accidents, since the 1970's when I began riding a bicycle as an adult. Bills such as those proposed could have prevented all those incidents.

I have done what I can as a cyclist to protect myself from injury by automobiles. This includes use of reflectors, battery operated rear-facing red strobe lights, front-facing white lights, and helmets and reflective tape on my helmets. While this helps when motorists are respectful of bicycles and other users of the roadways, those accessories do not help when motorists are malicious, careless, inattentive or ignorant. The bills proposed will provide additional protection to bicyclists terrorized or struck by such motorists. In addition, the bills requiring instruction regarding 'vulnerable roadway users' as part of driver's education will help create a cadre of drivers who are more aware of the need to share the road with other users, regardless of mode of transportation (walkers, runners, bicyclists, wheel-chair users, etc).

I strongly support the enactment of these bills and encourage to Senate Judicial Committee to act responsibly and promptly to bring these bills to the floor of the Senate and full legislature. While passage of bills can take time, it is imperative that the legislature act to pass these bills into law.

Respectfully submitted,



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